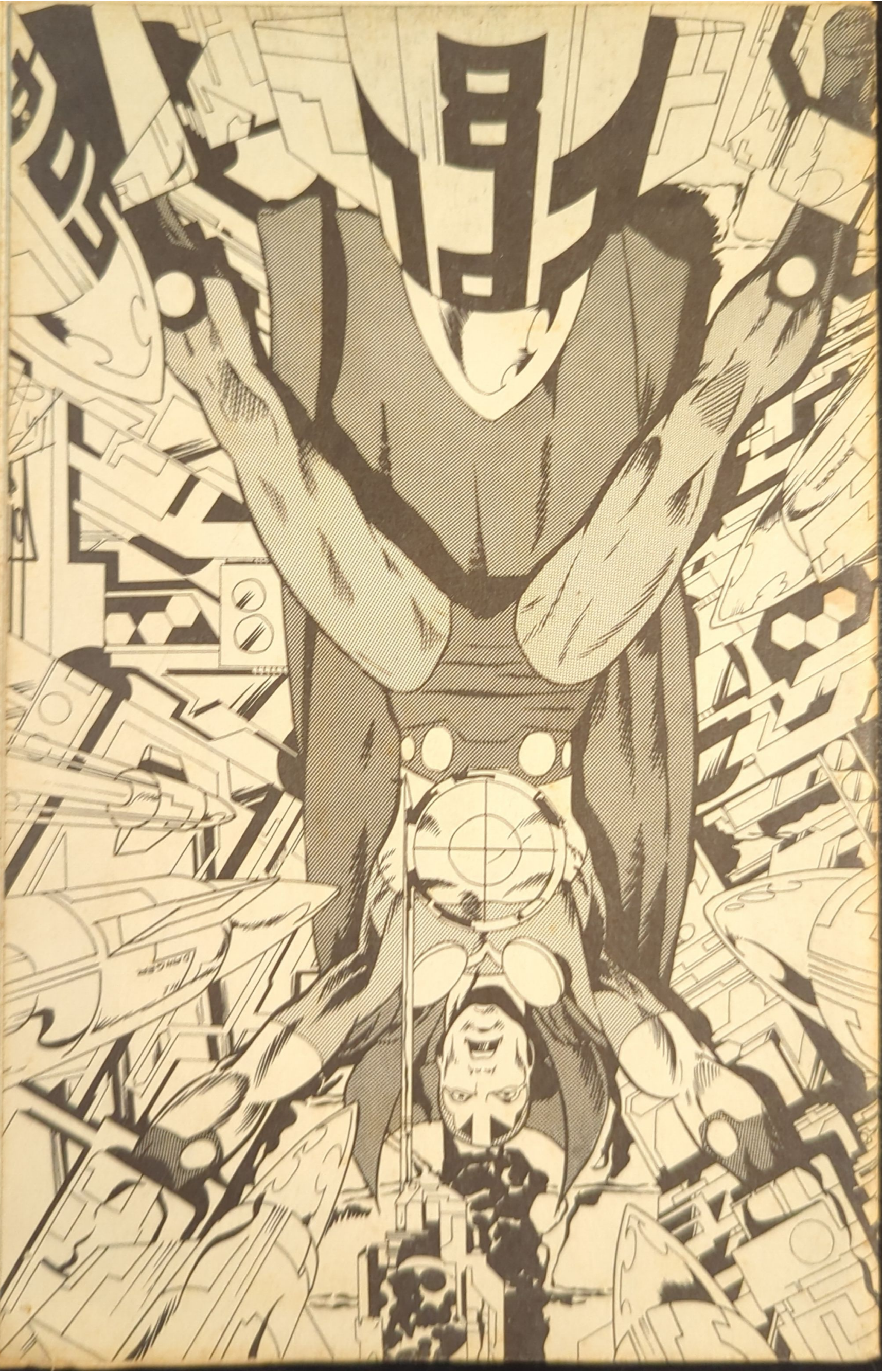

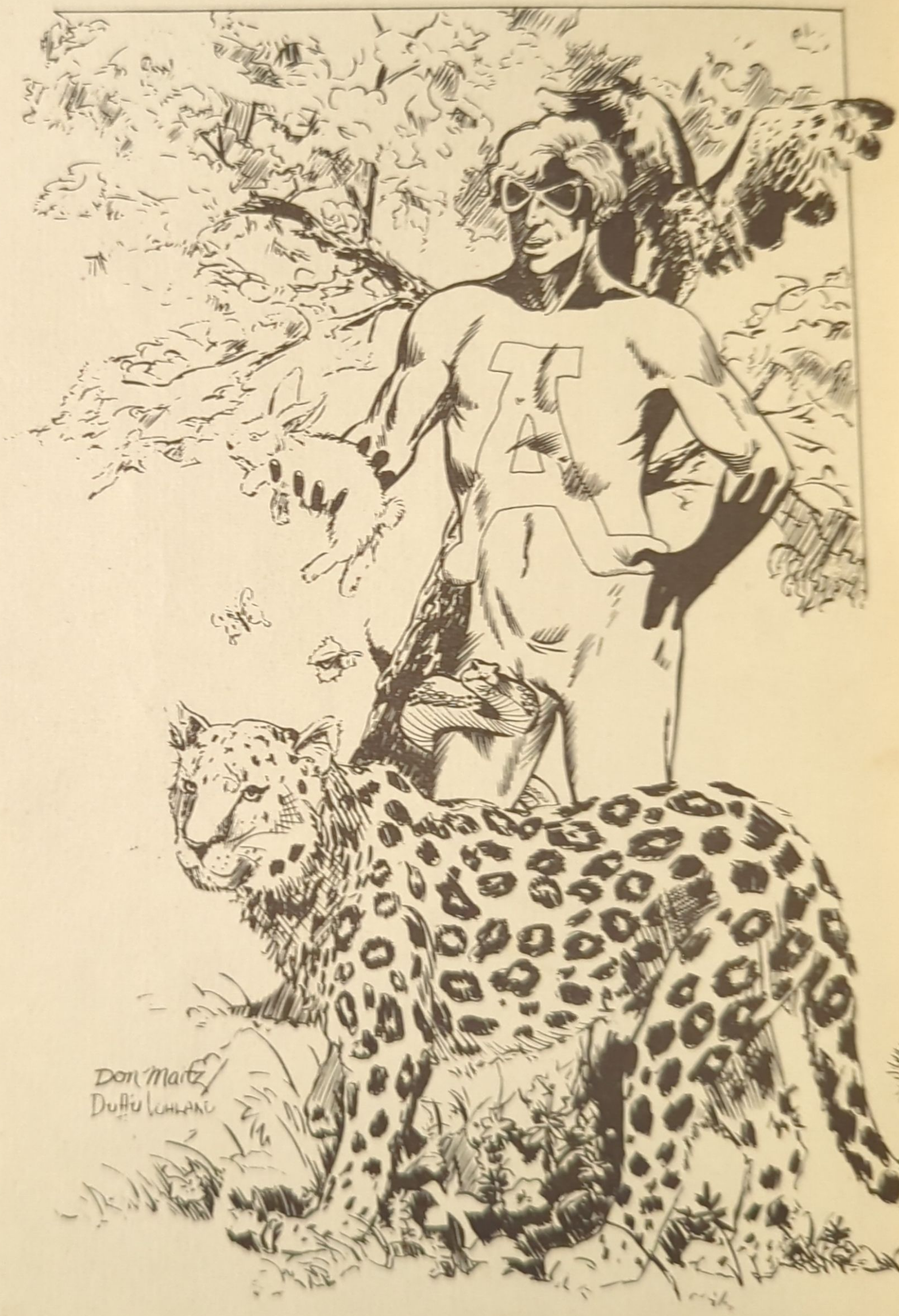
Don Maitz
Duffy Wohlart

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This issue is respectfully dedicated to perhaps the fan of all time, not to mention THE WORLD'S GREATEST INKER, Joe Sinnott. Thanks for the years of enjoyment you've given us! (not excluding our centerfold!)

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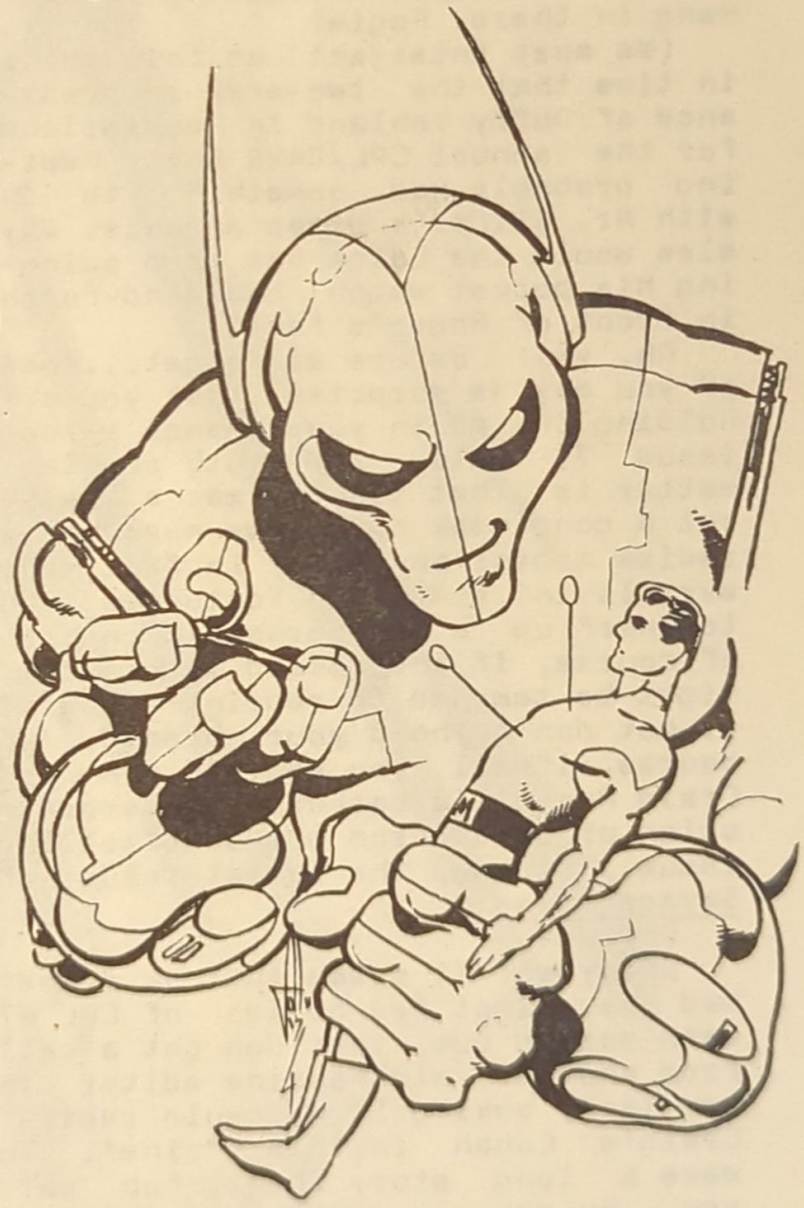

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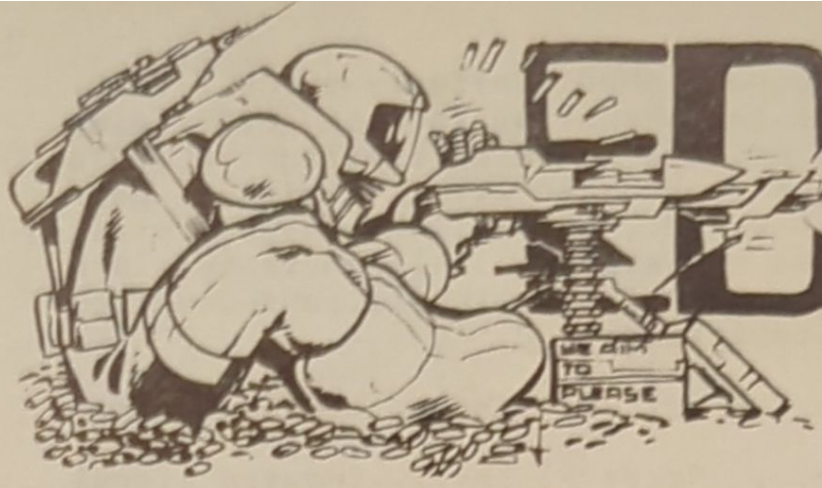


EDITORIAL

LAYTON & STERNO

Revelation time, folks!First off, as you've already noticed, I'm back at the editorial helm once again. Well... not really. Actually I'm sitting in for everybody's favorite fan, Roger Slifer. Slifer was supposed to be here telling how glad he was to be back home again in Indiana on the banks of the Wabash far away. However, at the last minute...quite literally...he decided that no one would ever believe that! Sooooo,it's back to Brooklyn for our man Slifer! Hang in there, Rogie!

(We must interject at this point in time that the two-week reappearance of Duffy Vohland in Hoosierland for the annual CPL/GANG Board Meeting probably had something to do with Mr. Slifer's disappearance. Why else would the Large One keep swinging his pocket watch back-and-forth in front of Roger's face?)

Oh, yes! Before we forget...some of you may be surprised that you are holding CPL #8 in your hands & not issue 7. Well, the truth of the matter is that issue 7 was a sell-out a good week before we even had a review appear anywhere! In fact,your ever-lovin' staff was fortunate even to snarf up a few personal copies! Of course, if the demand is great,we might be tempted to reprint number 7 ...but don't hold your breath. Of course, if all you want to see is Craig Russell's barbaric interpretation of Conan from our best-selling issue, pick up the latest issue of Savage Tales.

Oh, so?

Oh, yes! It seems that no sooner had the first few copies of CPL #7 been mailed out, that Bob got a call from another old fanzine editor in New York, asking if he could reprint Craig's Conan in "his 'zine". To make a long story short, Bob said yes. So now you can see Craig's art in a slightly larger format at all your better newstands. Gosh,we even got a little plug! (Thanks, Roy!)

This electrifying eighth issue of CPL hearlds the return of some new faces and some old friends. (In fact there are so many non-Gangsters in this crowd that your very obediant Gang and affectionate robot, Rog-2000 was almost caught with it's pages down!) So, it's a hearty hello to C.C. Beck, dashing Don Maitz, two great joes...Sinnott and Staton and our own favorite fan-femme,Paty! Greetings also to two old IU buddies, Frank Maynerd and Mike Uslan! Welcome back to Neal Adams and Dennis Fujitake. And finally here's a big tip of the Sterno hat to 'Lil Jack Monniger and "Captain Necco" himself, Dan Adkins.

Speaking of Dan, B'wana Bob recently returned from another safari to East Liverpool,where he absconded with one of Dan's drawing boards, three pages of art, and a couple packs of Dan's Neccos.
(Neccos are sugar wafers that Adkins eats by the truckload! Right on,man!)

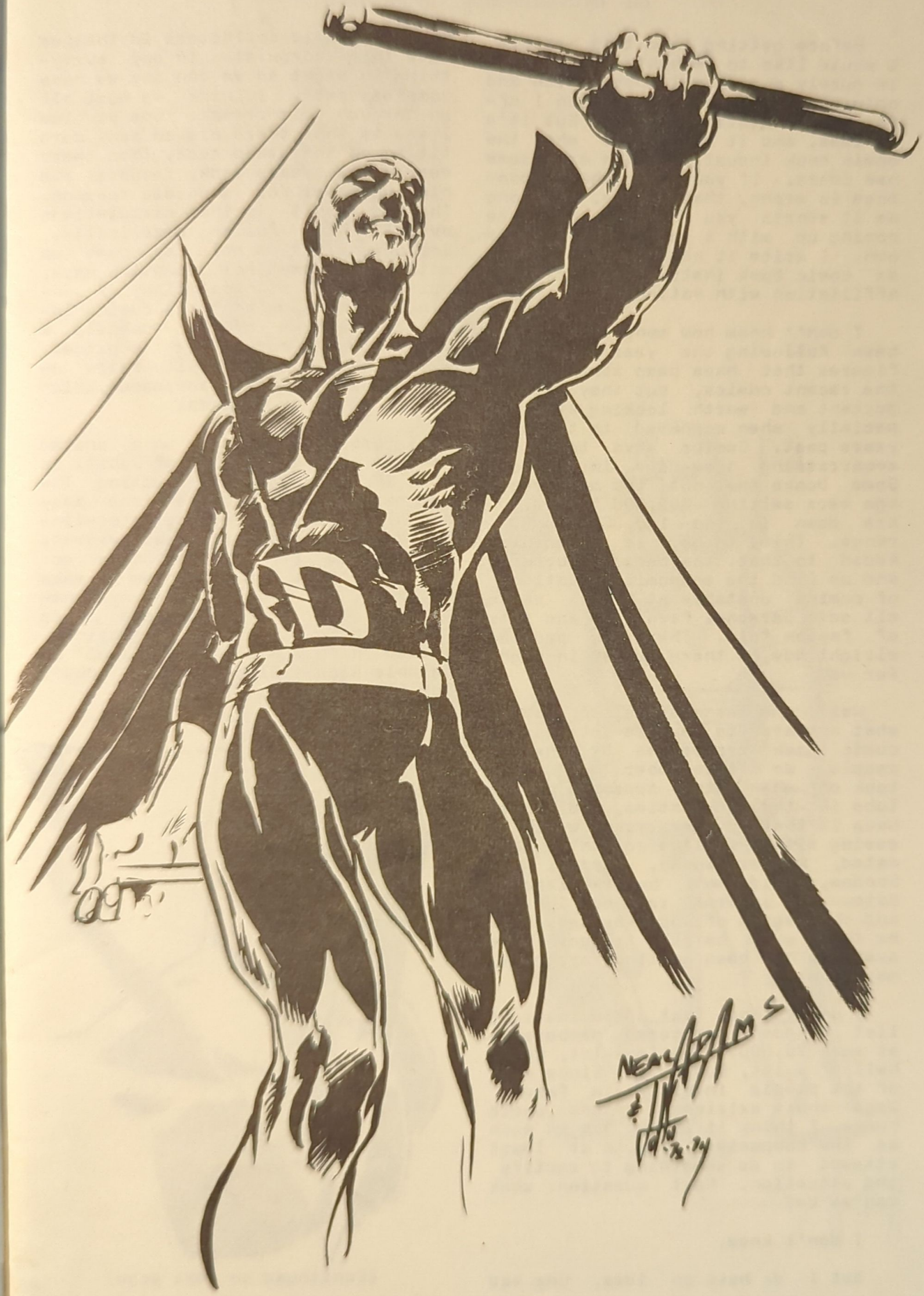
Well, that about wraps up this issue. Next go-around will feature an in-depth interview with Murphy Anderson, a six-page strip starring Rog-2000 and the whole darn Gang--as lovingly drawn by our own John Byrne and Duffy Vohland, and some surprise features you wouldn't believe!

Oh, some regular readers may have noticed the absence from our inside covers of the usual Charlton illos. It's not that we're losing our love for Charlton heroes...far from it! It's just that...well, to paraphrase our favorite radio station....Something BIG is coming to CPL in August! Watch for it!

And this just in: Confidential sources in the Big Apple reveal that you'll soon be seeing a lot of John Byrne & Duffy Vohland on the stands! Congratulations, guys! We wish you both a heap of success!

Before we finish up, we'd like to ask those who wish to contribute art or articles to CPL, to please make xerox copies of your work before you send it to us.(and unless you can do as good as Byrne, Maitz or other CPL artists, don't bother sending it.)

Okay, that's it! Settle back and enjoy another issue of America's favorite little fanzine!
Heavy Hemongers.....Bob and Sterno


NEAL ADAMS
'84

COMIC BOOK CRISIS:
A READER SHORTAGE?

Before getting into this article, I would like to emphasize that this is purely a personal observation and opinion. Perhaps the solution I offer is no solution at all. But it's an idea, and it seems that what the comic book industry needs are some new ideas. If you think what I propose is wrong, that's fine, as long as it starts you thinking and maybe coming up with a suggestion of your own. I write it not in my capacity as comic book instructor nor in my affiliation with National.

I don't know how many of you have been following the yearly sales figures that have been appearing in the recent comics, but they are important and worth looking at, especially when compared to those of years past. Comics have taken an embarrassing nose-dive in sales. Some books that not too many years ago were selling 300,000 to 700,000 are down in the 140,000-210,000 range. This, to me, is incredible. Added to that the paper shortage, and we find the economic situation of comics unstable at best. We've all seen personal favorites and pets of fandom fold. There's a problem alright.Now,is there relief in sight for us?

Well, one means of relief may be what appears to be a re-interest in comic book properties by the TV people. We all remember how comics took off when Batman appeared on the tube in the mid-sixties, and rumors have it that by next year we'll be seeing either in live action or animated, Wonder Woman, Tarzan, The Shadow, Spiderman, Super-Friends, Batman and Superman re-runs, Shazam, and the Legion of Super-Heroes. Maybe this will be the trigger that everyone has been waiting for. But, maybe not.

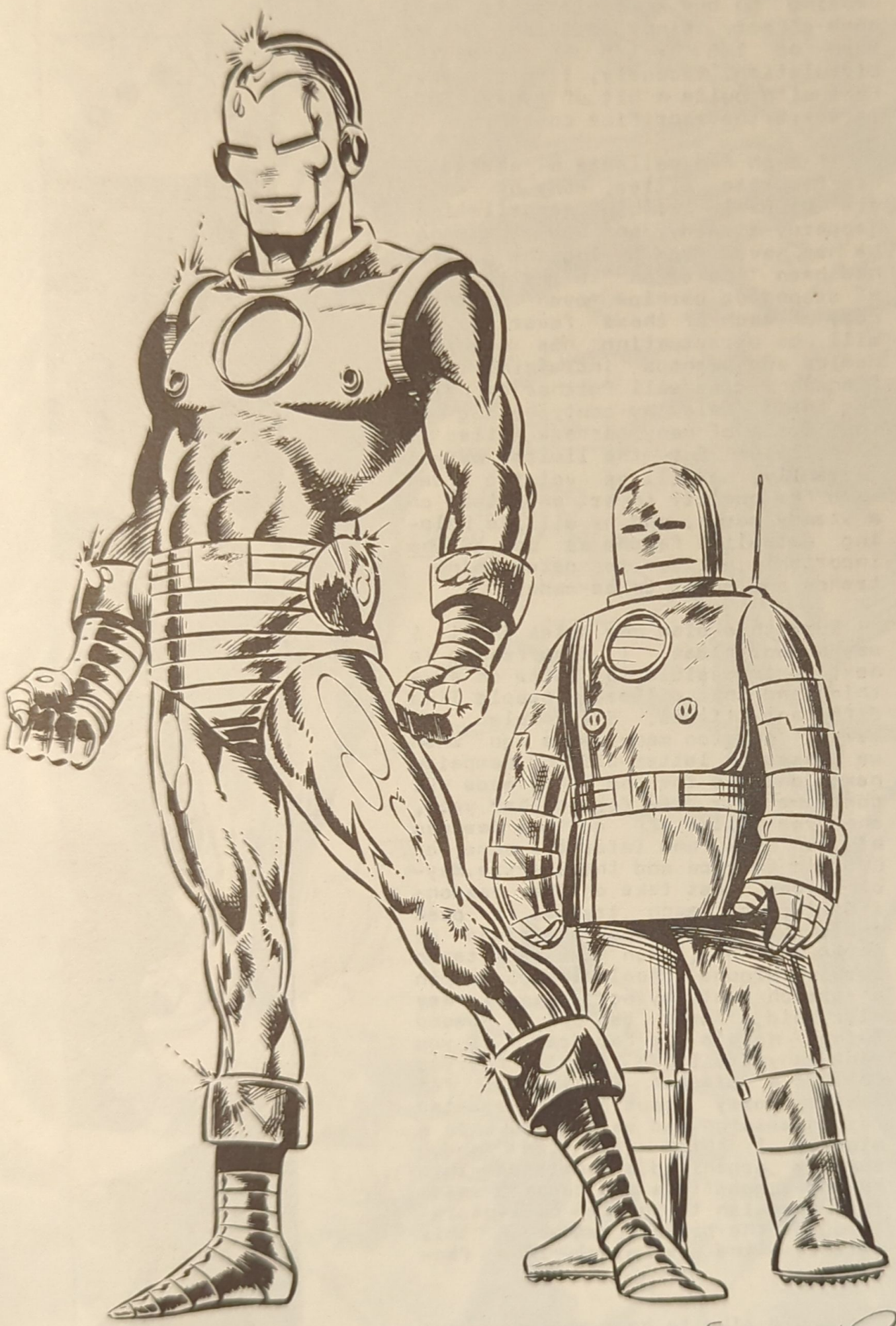
I understand that approximations list fandom's scattered membership at some 20,000. That's a lot, not a hell of a lot, but a lot. Since most of the people involved in fandom base their existance around comic books, I think it is our job as much as the companies' jobs,to at least attempt to do something to rectify the situation. Next question: what can we do?

I don't know.

But I do have an idea. One bad habit of comic collectors is that we have this compulsion to buy everything in sight so we can say we have complete sets. I think we must all go through withdrawal. One problem I see is that there are so many more titles on the stand today than there were a few years back, readers are picking fewer for economic reasons. The end result is that circulations overall have fallen drastically. Someone might be able to come up with a mathematical equation here, but being no mathematician, I continue. It seems that the comics industry is like HYDRA, --cancell a book and two more take its place. Also, the general quality falls as the massive quantity increases.Which bring us to my proposal.

I propose that we, as a united fandom, stop buying out of habit. So what if we've been collecting The Avengers or Mr. Miracle since they began? If the art and/or storyline has deteriorated to a great extent, STOP BUYING IT! Let the books go under,or force the companies to make a change. If you are a Harvey completist and they bring out their tenth Richie Rich title of reprints, called "Richie Rich On The Prowl" or "Richie Rich's Black Magic", DON'T BUY IT!!

(Continued on next page)



FUJITAKE/RUSSELL

What is the result? First, many of these reprint books or books that have fallen into hack-work will disappear or improve. 20,000 people ceasing to buy a comic will have some effect, since that can be as much as 1/5 or 1/6 of the book's circulation. Secondly, it will leave fans with quite a bit of money. This is where the sacrifice comes in.

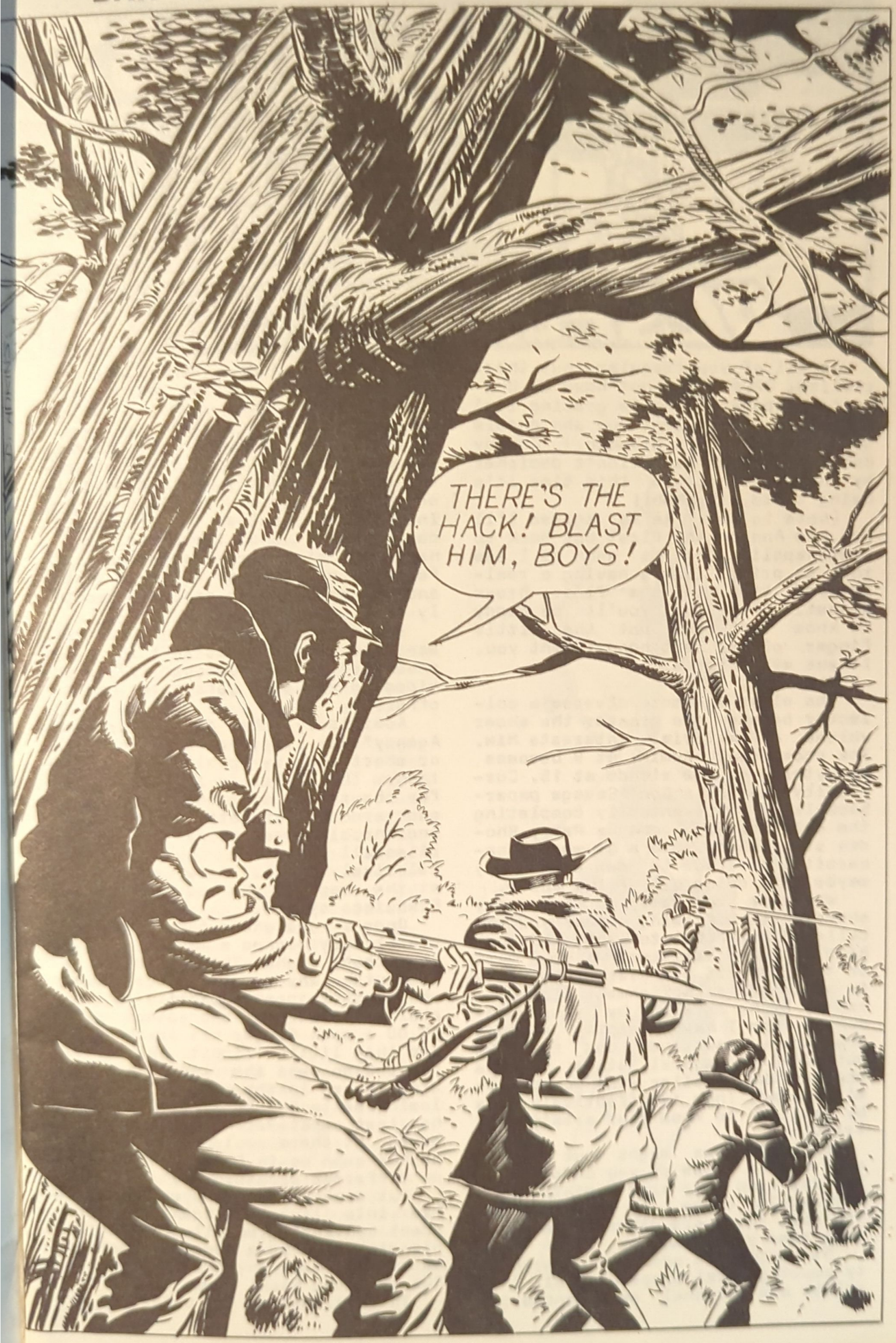
If each fan collects a series of his favorite titles, many of which are probably within cancellation jeopardy already, and uses the money he has saved from buying the junk he had been "hooked on" to instead buy a second or perhaps even a third copy of each of those favorites, he will be perpetuating his favorite comics and perhaps increasing their frequencies,he will further be helping their sales by contributing to the death of many garbage titles in competition for the limited market currently, he will be voicing a demand for quality in art and story on a steady basis, and he will be helping establish fandom as one of the important voices in determining trends and moves to be made.

Sure,this plan has holes in it & may be worthless. I know fandom is next to impossible to unite on anything and that different people like different titles. But I also remember not too many years ago when we amassed a letter-writing campaign next only to the one that made NBC continue Star Trek for another year, when we pulled off getting Hawkman his own book, and later the same for Captain America and the Spectre.Maybe we can just take on the responsibility of each trying to push comic books and hook a friend or three on them.(I can just see Sterno lurking around school playgrounds in a trench coat saying, "Psssst! Hey kid! Didja ever get off on Swamp Thing? Here's one for free. If you want anymore I can get 'em for you for 20¢ a piece." At least no fan has to worry about being arrested for possession and sale of KULL to a minor.) I think its time fandom somehow organized a committee into taking suggestions and began a massive campaign to unite collectors through the primary organs of this network---the most widely read fanzines.

I would like to hear what you have to offer. Maybe someboby else would, too.

MICHAEL E. USLAN
AUTHOR/LECTURER/INSTRUCTOR
"THE COMIC BOOK IN AMERICA"
3209 EAST 10TH STREET, APARTMENT 7A
BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA 47401

DAN ADKINS MEETS HIS ADORING PUBLIC!



As all of you regulars out there realize, CPL#7 did not have a One Last Desperate Chance gracing its' interior. (The first guy who cheers gets a shiv in his stomach.) Cowboy Bob Layton says he couldn't decipher my handwriting. So this time it's being typed. Nyahhh!!

(Note to Bob: As we agreed I'll put Lee Ann on the first bus back to Indianapolis just as soon as I see this in print. She's having a really good time in the floor broom closet. Oh... and you'll be happy to know that was not the little finger of her left hand I sent you. It was my sister's.)

Onward...

The older and more diverse a collector becomes the greater the sheer volume of material interests him. The occasional comic at 9 becomes everything on the stands at 15. Curiousity towards a Doc Savage paperback leads to eventually completing the collection. A chance Perry Rhodan story turns into a bi-weekly necessity. Or (woe to dem sinners!) maybe he's doing all of the above.

Whatever the case, a good many shekels start flowing out of you, the collector's pocket to that lady behind the cash register. A good part of this, 20-25% of every item, goes to whatever establishment is currently being graced by your presence. Now I have nothing against drugstores, newstands and the like but with the general state of the economy the retailer must somehow be eliminated. This is effectively done by getting to know your area's distributor.

(What follows might not be of much use to those of you under 12 or too far from your area's distributor for regular trips. If this is true, TOO BAD. There are other articles in this zine you know.)

Since I can't speak with certainty about general procedures all I'll relate are personal experiences interspersed with some general guesses. Most operations follow some general procedures so the guesses should hold true in your particular case.

The first inkling I got that a person could deal with the distributor came when Duffy Vohland described the benefits he received at the Indianapolis outlet. There he got comics early and at reduced rates. He (bless him overly large body) offered to mail me any titles I wanted and the arrangement proceded smoothly for a few months.

But after Duffy began his great eastward trek I was left to my own resources. So in October 1972 I decided to see what Lafayette had to offer.

Admittedly the "Twin City News Agency" was close; a 30 minute walk or short ride by public transportation. The dealer is the sole outlet for about 40 magazine handlers in and around Lafayette. Considering Indianapolis where one dealer supplies all of Marion County, this is relatively small. I refuse to guess at the scope of the New York or San Francisco system.

Once I knew where the distributor was it only became a matter of asking. Yeah, right! Think about it for a minute. Why would a businessman who deals in great quantity at great cost let a student who spends maybe $7.00 a week finger his merchandise? Add this little tidbit. The distributor also owns the two best magazine stores in the area. So by allowing me to buy from him directly he lost whatever small profit my buying at there would realize. (And he has seen me in both establishment on different occassions.)

But somehow in some way I talked him into it. The twenty minutes spent convincing, cajoling, asking and pleading will be a constant reminder as to the depths of my depravity. But what the heck! I was in!

The deliveries to Lafayette are

so general I'm sure they hold true in all cases. Magazines and paperbacks come in almost daily. Comics come in one lump grouping about every two weeks. Here's where a big problem enters; namely space. Usually every square foot of the building is packed floor to ceiling. So unpacking each item when delivered is unfeasible. Only comics and magazines slated for the stand in the next week are unwrapped and set out. These are now delivered once a week on Saturday, making room in the agency for a new batch.

The situation difers in Bloomington and Indianapolis because there is so much more room. Magazines & comics can be unpacked upon receipt then stacked until shipping time. So visits could occur once every two weeks instead of once a week. Comics would still be obtained very early if visits were timed correctly. But so much for Paradise, back to the situation in Lafayette.

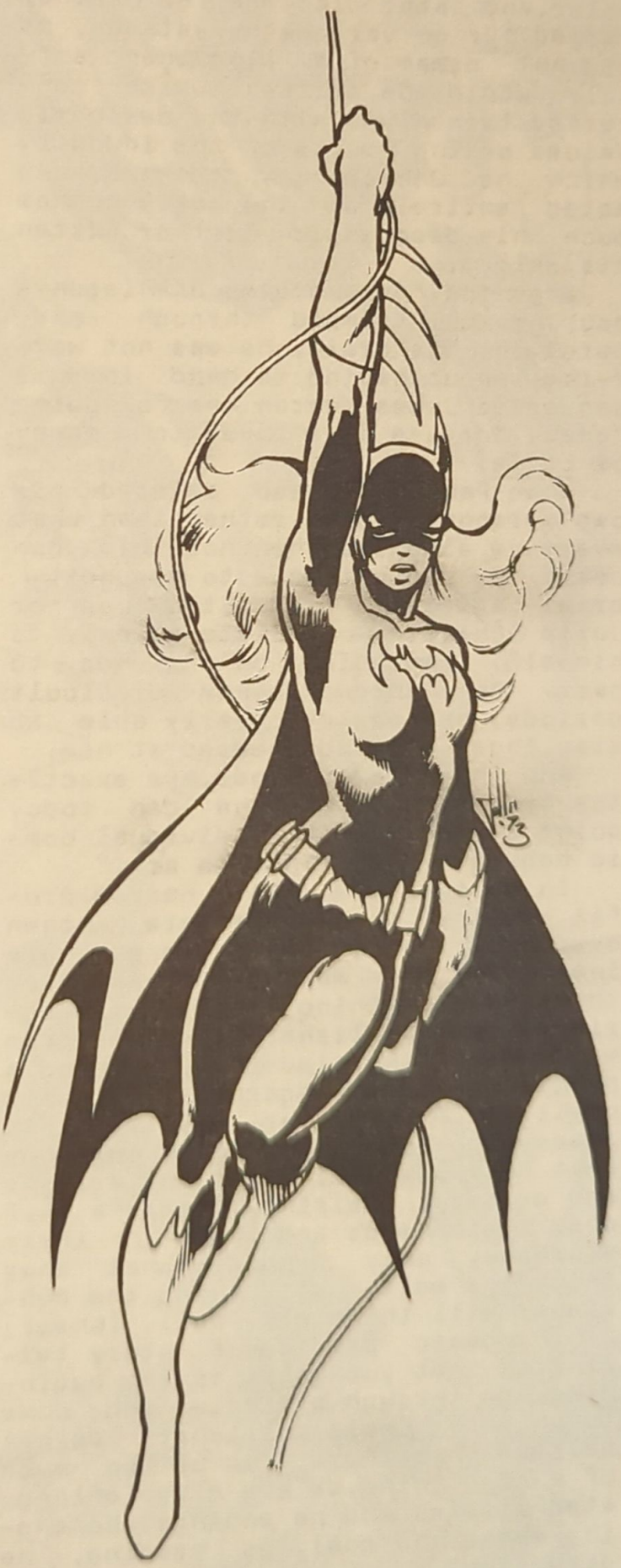
Physically new magazines are set out every Saturday and Wednesday. Comics get opened Monday afternoon and are stacked and divided into quantities each outlet can handle on Tuesday morning. I come before the division and have virtually a free run as to what I can pick up. If I arrive later, the only things I can buy are the leftovers. Believe me it's not pleasant seeing a book on Thursday and having to wait til Monday to buy it. But once they're counted, exactly that number of comics must be delivered.

Early or not the biggest advantage is still price. Magazines (e.g. The Limited Collectors' Editions, Warrens) selling for $1.00 I buy for 80¢. The 75¢ Marvel b&w's go for 60¢ Those at 50¢ are 40¢ and all 20¢ comics books (those that are left) sell for 15¢. And the new higher priced Marvels will be discounted similiarly. Put more pragmatically 10 DC,s, 1 Limited Collectors' Edition, 2 Super-Specs and 3 Warrens would be $5.50 instead of $7.00. Extrapolate over one year and you are going to Seuling Con for free. More than enough inducement for a drive or a walk.

So in general, decide if you spend enough money and are close enough to warrant regularly visiting a distributor. If it's feasible take a trip to get permission. Once that's over with find out the times when HE wouldn't mind your coming. Then keep coming regularly and establish yourself as a trustworthy customer. The top rule is to do as the distributor suggests. He holds all the aces and can take your $5.00 a week or leave it.

Heyll I can't quit before I mention the special feature in the letter's page of Creatures on Loose #29 Roy or somebody actually attempted to give some answers as to why strips get discontinued, does anyone read the letters, etc. Now if more space had been given over to answering the questions instead of plugging other mags.....

Grackle borgward,
'Doc' Larry Brnicky



DUFFY'S TAVERN PRESENTS:

Comic Art: Fact or Fiction?

by Scott Edelman

(My old buddy Scott is going to take the helm thish, with an article that makes some good points. Read on! .....Duffy

When man crushed his first berry in order to apply its juice to a nearby cave wall, he did not ponder the artistic merits of his work, or wonder at its implications. It took modern man to elevate what began as folklaw and religious ceremony to the realm of art.

When M. C. Gaines pasted up his first few reprint books for Eastman Color, and later placed a few of them marked 10¢ on various newsstands, he did not dream of a time when articles would be written which concerned themselves with the aesthetic values or the fruits of the industry which he unknowingly spawned. He acted entirely on the basis of how much his deed would further fatten his wallet.

When the fever dreams of Hieronymous Bosch tramped through and burnt out his brain, he was not worrying about having to hand in his canvas to James Warren the following Monday for use as a cover to Creepy or Eerie.

When Pablo Picasso painted his own personal vision, rather than what everyone else saw, he chose his own path. He did not have to see editorial approval from Stan Lee or Julie Schwartz. He listened only to himself. Depending on friends to carry him through many difficult periods, he was eventually able to slap those who had sneered at him.

And those, my friends, are exactly the reasons why no one can today point a finger at an individual comic book and say, "This is art."

In an industry with a narrow profit margin, boatrockers are thrown overboard. Comic publishers are more interested in making a fast buck than in maintaining artistic integrity. The publisher, wanting the money, is interested in publishing a popular strip, regardless of its quality. The editor, desiring to please the publisher, will only buy what he knows will sell. The artists and writers, desiring to keep a roof over their heads and food in their stomachs, only produce what they think the editor will think the publisher will think will sell. (Whew!)

The basic premise of story telling is that you start at the beginning, go through a middle, and come to an end. Comic publishers do not believe that there can be too much of a good thing. We are given enlongated middles and no endings. No ending means no goal, no meaning, no direction.

Remember when you used to buy Spiderman feeling as if it was actually going somewhere? That feeling no longer exists. You now realize that Peter Parker will never find happiness, that Aunt May will never die. If it sells, they'll try to stretch it over five hundred issues.

Superman will never marry Lois Lane. There can be too much of a good thing.

There are very few comic books which even come close to what a comic should be. Until he found his killer without the end of his story, Deadman approached what I am looking for. Kirby killed him, and any further attempts to resurrect the character will only serve to trample the corpse.

At times, CONAN contains the perfect balance of art and text, but it also has an ending which will never be reached. Conan will never be made a king in Marvel's version, for that will mean the end of the series.

Comic books are slanted to those age groups which buy the most comics, therefore many people are excluded. Editors can rant all they want to about how Gulliver's Travels can appeal to children as fantasy and to adults as social satire. but they can't truly point to a creation of their own which acts in the same manner.

A five year old cannot read Finnegan's Wake and I cannot stomach Dick and Jane Visit Aunty Em. The artist and writer of the comic ought to direct their energies towards communicating with those whose book list is comprised of such as the former, not the latter. The reason so few adults read comics is that they are chased away.

You may be wondering here to turn, now that I've put down Marvel, National, and without saying so all other mainstream comic publishers. Only two outlets are left. Jim Warren and the undergrounds.

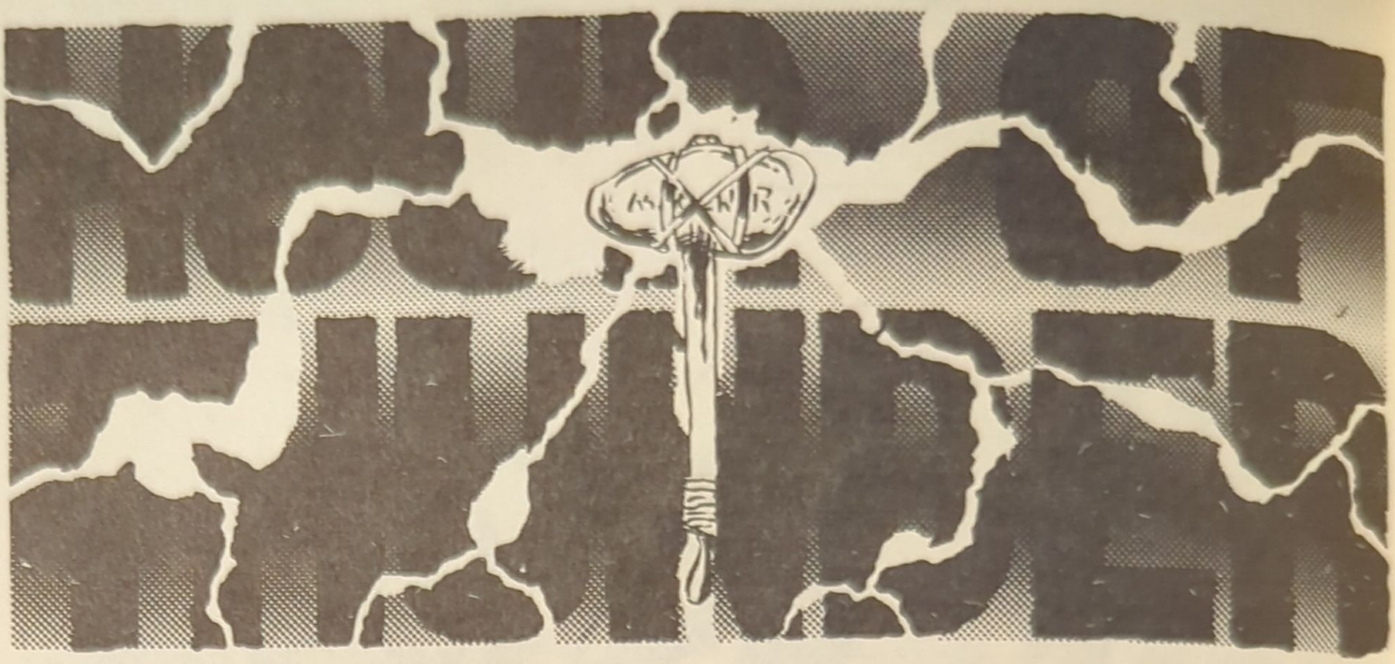
Jim Warren is the Ralph Ginsberg of comics, and if he wasn't as money grabbing as he is (yes Jim, I know it's an industry), comics would be a better place for us all. As of this writing, Marvel's black-and-white books are just bleached four-colors. The stories appear to be simple transplants from the monthly books. except for a naked breast or chewed up arm scattered here and there throughout the issue. If you must look for art in the overgrounds, look for it from Warren.

Finally, the undergrounds. No deadlines, comic code, royalities, and more are perfect conditions for artists to work. We have only to wait until they mature.

Believe it or not, I love comics. Enough to try to keep the dying art alive a few more years.

Comic art? Never seen the stuff.

Don Maitz



(WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE: Noted newspaperman Godfrey Spelling while seeking shelter from a torrential downpour suddenly discovers that he has been transported to a strange, wintery land. Walking about in a daze he encounters the man-god Thor Redbeard, the legendary son of Woden. The Asgardian, chained to a massive oak, instructs Spelling to lift the hammer Mjolnir and strike at his bonds. So doing, Spelling frees Thor, who then explains how he was entrapped by Loki after the holocost of Ragnarok. "Now that he is free," says Thor,

"Our next task is to find Loki."

"Our task?" asks Godfrey.

"Of course, friend mortal. It is <u>your</u> universe which he'll destroy!" NOW READ ON.....)

Strange comrades-in-arms, thought Godfrey, as he and the Redbeard crossed the mountainous hills. On a strange mission. After a strange foe. Traveling through a strange land.

Loki had stolen his Thunder-Chariot, Thor explaied, and used it to create havoc on Earth--earthquakes, floods, wars. Loki said he would crush the universe. Thor intended to crush "that weasel" long before that could happen. The harsh words of a man concerned only with revenge? Spelling could only wonder. How could he ever understand the emotions of a god?

Their path was crossed by a horrible apparition, a woman half beautifully-alive & half skeleton-dead. This was Hel. Redbeard described her as "a woman never truly alive who longs for death, a death that can not come until the last of the gods have been taken into her care." Hel moved on, indicating as she did the direction in which Loki waited. They followed as best they could. Spelling occasionally broke the silence with a new query.

"Thor, tell me about Asgard. Where was it?"

"Asgard? It wasn't a place as you think, friend. It was the combination of men and ideals. We took it wherever we roamed. We were gods, men said. We thought ourselves dedicated beings. None of us perfect, but dedicated. We were smug, perhaps. We made the mistakes of men, certainly. Yet we never lost sight of the ideals we believed in, no matter the stain on our past. The best and worst, but always striving for the best. That was Asgard."

They were silent, these two, as they walked their roads. One was lost in images of the past. The other thought of courage, the dream of love, and perhaps the promise of sleep.

Hel floated before them, leading them.

Loki waited.

Loki waited at the edge of this world. Over the edge lay the most complete emptiness Godfrey had ever seen. And Loki? The god of evil, like Thor, gave the impression of strength, strength with corruption at its center. Spelling surveyed that craggy face. He became afraid. Thor's reaction, on seeing his immortal enemy, was to become the very model of rage. He bellowed hatred like a thunderclap and charged across the field.

Loki was caught unawares, but Redbeard's cry had given him time to react. He drew his sword. This world froze as hammer and sword were pitted against each other. Mighty Thor struck fiercely and Loki defended himself as best he could. The sounds of rolling thunder echoed through the clouds.

(continued on page 18...)

SF

Loki's sword snaked foward. Thor brought Mjolnir upward underneath the sword and knocked from the traitor's hand. A blow of his massive fist sent Loki sprawling onto the ground. Thor Redbeard raised his hammer to strike a final blow. Loki desperately smiled and played his final ploy.

"Hold, Redbeard! Destroy me & you destroy the universe. I have already put my plans onto operation!"

"No tricks, sinister one! Your time has come.Prepare yourself for your daughter's touch!"

"THOR! WAIT!"

The eyes of the immortals turned to Godfrey Spelling, a small man in a world of giants who, nevertheless stood between two gods and the life of his world.

"Are you mad, mortal?To disturb the doings of the gods?"

"Listen to me, Thor! Didn't you hear what Loki's said? He's already started his plans to destroy the universe! You can't kill him! You can't toss away a billion billion worlds!"

"You presume too much, mortal! Leave us whilest I take long-awaited revenge on this worm!"

"REVENGE! Is that all you can think of? Is that the gift of Asgard? You lied to me, Thor! You're not a hero, much less a god of any kind! Gods care! You're a selfish, unthinking war machine that doesn't know the war is over! Your revenge? What about that world down there, my world? What about those three billion people down there? Don't they mean anything?"

The god of thunder raised his hammer to silence Spelling. He caught the burning gaze in the newsman's eyes and was ashamed. It had been a long time since righteous anger had been leveled at him and he knew it had been too long. Was this the ultimate fate of a hero? To slowly become unable to distinguish between the good and the evil? To battle without thinking?

"I know what I must do,Spelling," Thor said quietly.Facing Loki again, the Redbeard spoke. "Speak, evil one,and I will push aside my revenge for all time."

"A bargain then, Thor Redbeard?"

"A bargain."

"Done! And you are a fool, Thor! For you have doomed all in those words. We, you and I, are the tools of destruction. Think, dull one! Did you ever look at the world down there?

"Science rules there. We are the only survivors of an existence when magic ruled all. We pose a threat to science's rule and our mere presence has disrupted the universe since the fall of the Asgardians. And, as science grows, so does our power until everything erupts in the final holocaust. All will die!

"And do you know how the universe can be saved,Redbeard? By our deaths and our deaths alone! And you have given your word not to kill me! The final jest, Thor! The heroes doom all!"

(continued on page 22...)

clobberin' cutie

A fellow that stands out in a crowd...that's Ben Grimm, our vernal Play-thing! Test-pilot, weight-lifter, and deep-sea diver are but a few of the vocations blue-eyed Benjy has followed in his job as trouble-shooter for Richards & Associates, a Manhattan-based firm. But homesteading in the Big Apple doesn't keep our Mr. Grimm down! A natural bon vivant, Big Ben is just as at home in exotic locales like Latveria as he is on Yancey Street. "Yeah, I get around a little," asserts Ben.

Always one for physical fitness, Ben can often be found on a brisk spring day in Central Park, jogging down the paths, feeding pigeons, and assaulting the occasional mugger. "Guess I'm just a kid at heart," he says. "Besides, exercise is good for ya! It improves your disposition....and it's good for your appetite!" No one could ever accuse Ben of not having a hearty appetite! Never one to pick over his meals, the orange wonder is perfectly impartial in his diet...he'll try anything once! A typical Friday night might find him with favorite date, Alicia, at Mama Leone's ("I'm a sucker for pasta!") but Ben is just as at home at Nathan's snarfing franks.

As for his romantic plans...well, Big Ben's eyes never seem to stray far from Miss Masters' side, but he admits to having some misgivings about future marital bliss. "I'm as much a romantic as the next guy," says Ben, "but I really don't know if marriage is right for me. If I settled down, it might break some hearts. I guess ya might say I belong to my public."

PLAYTHING OF THE MONTH

The wild laughter of the god of evil told Godfrey what Thor's centuries-long pursuit of mad Loki had done. The constant fear worked on Loki and took its tol. And Thor? He grasped Loki's arm firmly and raised Mjolnir once more.

"No, Thor! You promised! You promised that you would let me live! I want to live to see the end of everything!"

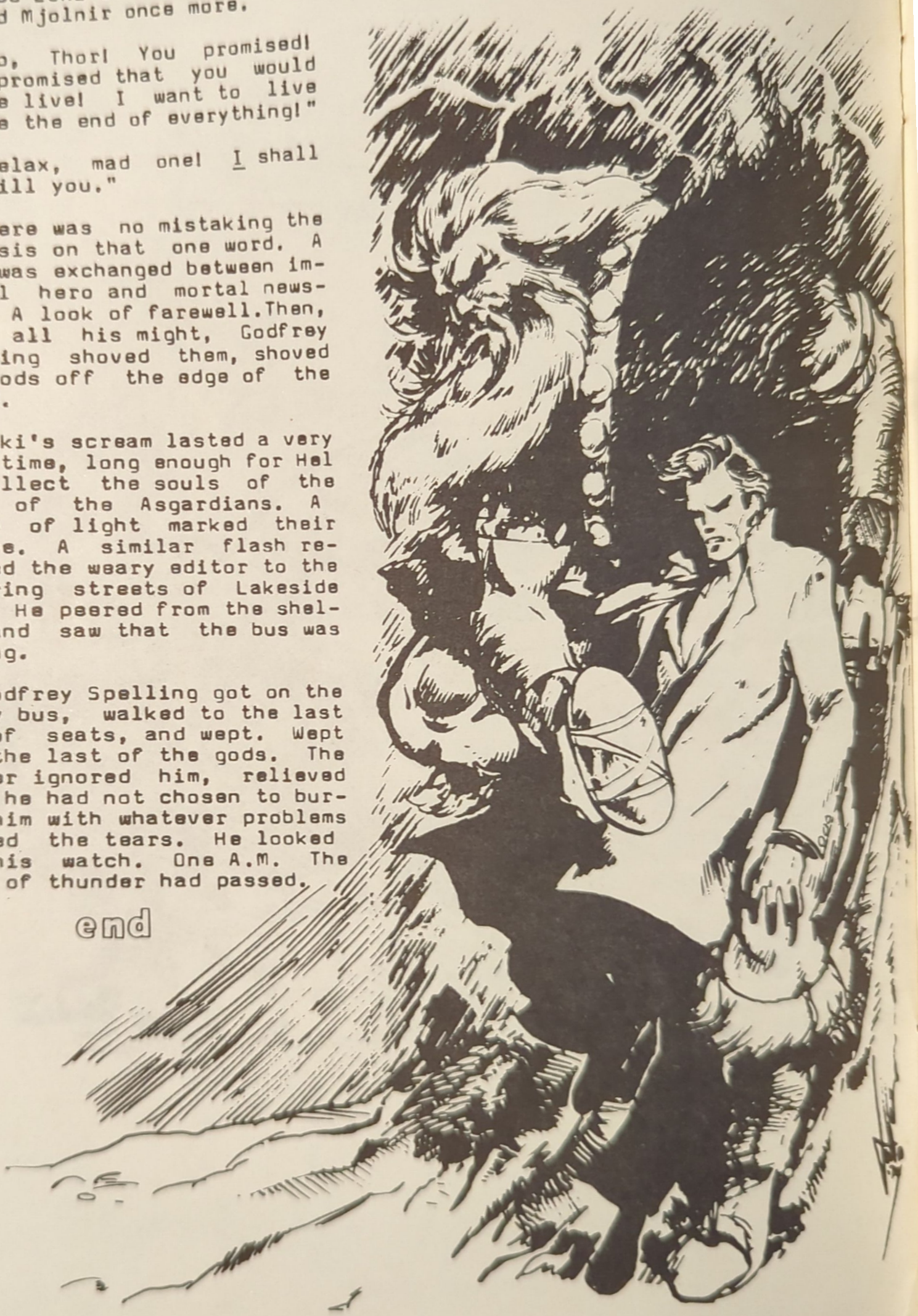
"Relax, mad one! I shall not kill you."

There was no mistaking the emphasis on that one word. A look was exchanged between immortal hero and mortal newsman. A look of farewell.Then, with all his might, Godfrey Spelling shoved them, shoved the gods off the edge of the world.

Loki's scream lasted a very long time, long enough for Hel to collect the souls of the last of the Asgardians. A flash of light marked their demise. A similar flash returned the weary editor to the clearing streets of Lakeside City. He peered from the shelter and saw that the bus was coming.

Godfrey Spelling got on the empty bus, walked to the last row of seats, and wept. Wept for the last of the gods. The driver ignored him, relieved that he had not chosen to burden him with whatever problems caused the tears. He looked at his watch. One A.M. The hour of thunder had passed.

end



LETTER PAGE

Dear Rogie-2000,
The cover of CPL #7 wasn't too visually impressive for me. Take a look at it! It took me a second to realize it was Dr. Strange and what is that holding him, fire, ectoplasm, smoke, jello, barf, a voracious Big Mac?
All in all, CPL was pretty bad without "Doc Larry Brnicky"s column. Bring back this feature immediately and it will improve the next issue greatly.

Grackle Borgward,
"Doc" Larry Brnicky
W. Lafayette, Indiana

Dear Bob,
I'm taking the opportunity now to write you. My schedule takes up most of my time. Unfortunately, it's an around-the-clock life.
Believe me when I tell you it's a marvelous thing to see magazines like yours because of the tremendous interest in the business of making comics represented in CPL.
Thanks for thinking of me.

Sincerely,
Gene Colan
c/o Marvel Comics

Dear Rogie,
I have so many good, nay, great things to say about CPL that I don't know where to start. The cover was wonderful, good lettering and an excellent drawing by Craig Russell, which could have been better inked.
I feel that a regular series is a must for CPL. Just think of a series drawn by Adkins, Gulacy, Byrne or Russell!
Also, I feel you should answer fan's letters in the letters page. Do you agree?

Jackie Frost
West Monroe, La.

EDITOR'S NOTE: "YES."

Dear Rog-2000,
First off, who is Sterno? Secondly, whats Rog-2000 got to do with CPL? (although I love the Byrne illos of him.) And third, how do you manage to put together such a great fanzine for so little a cost as 50¢?

Ken Meyer Jr.
Savanna, Ga.

EDITOR'S NOTE: (1) A mad Latverian worm rancher with delutions of godhood. (2) The real brains behind CPL/ Gang Publications. And (3)slave labor. Satisfied?

Dear Gang,
What a delightful fanzine! I've only breezed over it during a coffee break, but the visual impression was good. It makes me ache for 1967 when all I had was time. It's not that way anymore, though. I've got to get re-adjusted to being a real free-lance artist again.
Thanks for thinking of me.

Michael Kaluta
New York, N.Y.

Dear Rog-2000,
I'm writing because of a desire to write a blistering retort to Warren Pringle's MISS-ive!
I was once told (by a teacher) that in order to have a valid opinion, the opinion should have some basis in fact. Just because John Byrne is not Mr. Prindle's "cup of tea" and Duffy is not his idea of a good inker (I'm assuming this from his third paragraph statement) doesn't mean that the work lacks merit. In fact, I doubt Prindle's ability to judge a good piece of artwork from a bad piece. As an art major and fan artist, I find John's work utterly fantastic! His work is usually well inked(whether he or Duffy does the honors), well constructed, dynamic and all around excellant.
I really don't understand what Prindle's life-long hatred of Marvel has to do with Duffy's Tavern not doing "a thing for him!" Duffy's Tavern didn't do a thing for me and I like Marvel...and National...and Charlton...and Warren...and Skywald ...and Red Circle...and Gold Key... and anybody who has a comic worth reading.
And to belittle Duffy just because he does backgrounds for National (continued on page 31...don't yell!)

THE FIRST STORY-TELLING ARTIST THRILLS HIS AUDIENCE WITH FANTASTIC TALES

WHO NEEDS REALITY?

by C.C. Beck

Comic strips originally were comic, as some few still are. They told jokes taken from vaudeville acts. For some reason many clowns want to play Hamlet and some comic strip creators do almost exactly that: they dress all their characters in costumes and have them standing around in heroic poses. And standing...and posing...with little or nothing to say.

Now when an actor(and that's what a comic strip character is,an actor) has nothing to say and nothing to do, he's pretty dull. Lavish backgrounds and elaborate panel layouts don't help, they only make things worse. Comic strips often become like those super-production movies turned out by Hollywood at its worst when full symphony orchestras, hundreds of chorus girls, and thousands of extras were used in every scene and stories were so unimportant that they were often left out.

A good comic artist will want to make his readers laugh or cry at his act, not admire the costumes and settings. For this reason he'll keep his costumes and backgrounds simple and show only the action necessary to his story. If he's telling a joke,he'll get a good joke to tell first! All the costumes, dialects and elaborate settings in the world won't make a poor joke better! Now a joke is just a story with an ending that makes people laugh. If they laugh at the wrong time the joke is ruined; if they laugh at the storyteller's act is destroyed. A joke is just one kind of story,of course. Other stories make people cry, gasp with wonder, thrill, pant,shiver---- even get so worked up that they're ready to dash out and kill, loot and burn (or vote...which often leads to the same things).

People with the ability to tell good stories, that is,to create them in the first place, are very rare. A man must have something very special in his makeup to be able to gather together a crowd of his fellow men and hold their attention with nothing but his words. Some story creators were so good that their stories still hold audiences long years after the authors are dead and gone. Such stories are still better than inferior stories beautifully told, or acted, or staged and lighted by master craftsmen. Now since good storytellers are very rare, there are never enough of them around to fill all the books, stages and magazines (of which comics are one varity) that publishers and theater- and TV-owners have waiting.

Therefor our media managers are constantly supplying the public with inferior products and the sad thing is that neither they nor the public knows the difference! Both will laugh just as heartly at the sight of a cripple or a deformed human being as at a man in the makeup of a clown. The public will flock to a hanging, a fight, or any disaster such as an earthquake,a plane crash, or a shipwreck. When such entertaining natural events are not available eager promoters will put on rock festivals, political conventions, religious gatherings and simalar staged events in their places.

People always like to think that what they're reading in a book or watching on a stage is real,not made up. As reality is either very dull or utterly overpowering--often quite beyond human comprehension---what is presented to an audience must be selected and put together by what are called artists, that is, people who make "artificial" arrangements of things. These are the very people who are in such short supply, as we have said. Even when they are available publishers and managers and promoters often refuse to listen to them, believing that the public (which they regard as a collection of utterly mindless morons) wants only meaningless junk. In this they are partly right; meaningless junk is closer to reality. And the public thinks it wants reality.

But it doesn't. It wants to escape from reality. It wants heroes bigger and bolder than life;it wants heroines smaller and frailer than real women ever were; it wants kids and animals much cuter and more endearing than real ones. It wants villians and dwarves and giants and witches and ogres. It wants magic--and witchcraft---and above all, gods and demons, or better yet, a God and a Devil. After all, that's the first story ever told, isn't it?

But since those two co-creators started everything off so splendidly the promoters and the property men and the ticket sellers have taken over, and look at the shape the world's in today. You couldn't even make a good comic strip about it! So let's forget about reality, as far as comic strips are concerned anyway.Lets have some fun and jokes and entertainment...even if it only exists in our minds.

WOMEN IN COMICS

by Paty

With one very talented exception, there's no such thing! Oh, there's plenty of gals in the offices...in the coloring dept.....behind the scenes... everywhere EXCEPT the main creative fields (i.e. editing, writing, pencilling, inking). But there are no women in creative roles in either of the two major companies. Why? There are plenty of adequate-even talented-people in both writing and art fields. May I suggest that it is one, a combination of, or even all of several reasons.

1. Women writers and artists are usually not as pushy about their work. They are less inclined to buck the hassle of competition. They are less inclined to over-sell themselves and therefore may not make their interest known.

2. The ratio of males to females wishing to enter the field is very low. There ARE less female reader-buyers, probably because comics (except for those inane 'love' rags) are male oriented. The women in them aren't real women...so there is no reason for gals to really want to read them to any great extent. Therefore. there are less talented women who even CONSIDER comics illustration or writing.

3. Women -because of their physiological, psy hological make-up tend to view things differently.. and the formula for comic mag art and writing has always been based on the male interpretation of how scenes should be seen and written. Woman tend to pick up on small things and fine detail most men miss...expressions, emotional reactions, interpersonal relationships of characters, etc.etc. (Only one male artist I've seen even begins to see things as a woman sees them - Neal Adams!And even Roy Thomas admits Adams is bucking the formula! But they 'take it' from Neal because not only is he an artistic genius.... he's MALE!) So... is it that the editorial policies and formulas cannot cope with the female view ...OR is it that women won't work for people whom they Know are going to try to force them into doing scenes and dialogue that is all wrong.

4. The companies themselves are too confusing to work for. They are either not sure what to expect from women or what to ask for. Case in point: (this from my own experience) on Cat #3, I was given three intro pages to pencil... which I assumed they liked since R.T. then sent me the synopsis of the rest of the story with instructions to do a very lightly pencilled break down and then to bring it in to talk with the writer and see if I had told the story coherently and if anything would need changing (obviously if anything had to be changed it would be easier to change before a lot of shading and detail work were put in.) So a week or so later I was back with the'lightly pencilled breakdown' which they took (vaguely mumbling something about why wasn't this pencilling more detailed) and which I never saw again. I never talked with the writer, but since they only switched two panels I guess everything was OK. But...get this.... THEY INKED THE BARE BREAKDOWN!!!! With no shading added, no details or background, no Nuthin! AIIEE! Did they want a breakdown or a finished pencilling? I still do not know! (and I have a sneaky suspicion they don't either!)

There are, as I mentioned earlier, a goodly amount of gals in coloring. Perhaps the 'bosses' don't realize the importance of good coloring and, thinking it less important, allow women (slave labor) to do it! Hmmmm, didn't anyone ever tell them?Coloring can make or break a book!

Speaking of coloring,....five'll getcha ten that's where Marie Severin is! With all due respect to this lady's obvious talent in the coloring field, I, for one, miss her pencils on Kull! Was it HER wish to drop pencilling chores on this mag.. ...or was it THEIR"S?

While we're on the subject of women in comics,let's zap off on another tangent and look at woman characters. Oy Vey! (roughly translated...Oh Pain...) I've said it before and I'll keep on saying it... comic women are not REAL! The people who decide what kind of a person any given character is (either editors or writers...artists have very little to say about anything!) are all

men! Now, men understand the psychological and physiological make-up of men so all of your male characters...no matter how diversified in their outlooks and/or talents....are all real. Guys can identify with 'em! But I have yet to meet a man who admits he understands much of anything about women! The result, of course, is that either the woman character will come across as a flippety, self-centered, brainless puff of fluff...or that she will be ultra-butch (a body with boobs instead of biceps....with male reactions, poses, etc.). This is a very good reason why gal-oriented mags like Shanna and The Cat bombed. They were unacceptable to already existing male readerships (what man wants to play dummy while the girl grabs the kudos) and equally unacceptable to the potential female readership (who wants to read inane lies about oneself? Women don't think, act or emote like that!) But the formula that made a success of Spidey, the Avengers, etc. was wrong for these mags. Why? Because women were the main characters..... and women are not men!

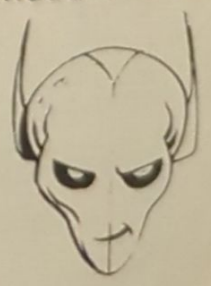
The same can be said for just about all the females in the super duper line. D. C. or Marvel....it makes no difference.... women characters are never developed because writers know their deficiencies in this area. And if, once in a great while, a woman does grab the spotlight for an ish, the action is never anything that will let us know more about her as a person...it's just another sooper-doop doing his.. oops, her...job!

Take Wanda, for example. She hasn't developed one bit lately, and there's been plenty going on in her life to work with! We know what makes Thor tick... we know the intricacies of Cap's life...we've been treated to the inner rumblings of Hawkeye's semi-brain..we dig T'challa's socio-racial hangups and Iron Man's 'heartaches'...but Wanda????? Ha! Now, there is no reason why a literate and intelligent broad or two couldn't help with a female character's development. Whats wrong with a writer getting together with a gal or four and saying...Look,I've got this situation...how would a woman react? What would she say? How would she say it? And why? How would she react if the person she were with reacted thus..... How, for example, could I ever make Wanda, waking up in the Vision's arms,angry at his obvious love and concern??? (The above example was taken from Avengers #99, page 21,panels 2,3,4, &5, which to me,and I'm sure to many other girl readers, was a veritable MASTERPIECE OF BUNGLING the dialogue of a male-female scene!)If one truely understood women the desired result is quite possible. The Vision's answer would never have produced anger and withdrawal...it being as much a declaration of his feelings as he could make under the circumstances. Only a sharp and stoney retort to the effect that "I am answerable to none for my actions..." -or a similar statement- could have produced in Wanda confusion and subsequent withdrawal.Understanding why women react is the key to understanding how they react...and the key to making them real. Men never have taken the time to learn why... and probably never will! So, if men must write comics, is it not obvious that womwn should at least be consulted on pertinent scenes?!

I might even suggest a female co-author or counselor for every mag that has a female co-star or leading character. A bit much, you say?How else to deal with the problem when your readers are clamoring for a more active part for women...and when your writers admit they don't know how to handle the female characters that exist! And once the complete strategy was mapped out in the writer's mind, he surely ought to tell the artist so that the character reacts properly in picture as well as dialogue.

Before I finish,I'd like to toss one more thought in the air and see if it gets a reaction from anyone. Established mags with well defined characters are the ideal place to show the development of the male-female relationship,as opposed to the 'love' mags in which a character is supposed to be developed in less than seven pages (HA!). It is the ideal place to instruct young males (as well as females) in the art of romance. Guys like to see a well laid out (no pun intended)love scene as much as girls do..but they usually draw the line at the 'love' rags. An action and adventure mag is probably one of the best places to teach young men that tenderness is not 'sissy'...that gentleness is not weakness...and that even the most heroic men can cry without losing their masculinity! To accomplish this, of course,the writer must show what makes not only men tick... but women as well. Whether they know it or not, the comics need female writers and artists!

END



(Continued from page 23)
seems to indicate that Mr. Prindle's mind is very narrow and small! If I were Duffy, I wouldn't give a damn if someone like Prindle read my column or not!

Finally, why do "more established heroes"? If everyone did illos of Superman,Batman, Captain America and other "established heroes" fanzines would be terribly sterile, boring, and to say the least, repititious. Ever hear that"varity is the spice of life", Prindle? Well, it is true, varity never killed a fanzine. I'm all for seeing old friends like Caption Atom, the Ray, the Heap, Shaing-Chi, the Phantom,the Zombie, Rogie-2000, E-Man, Solomon Kane and anyone else as long as they're done well.

Also,I doubt the existance of Mr. Prindle, because we have been told that we are a nation of well-educated human beings and Mr. Prindle gives us no indication that he is either <u>educated</u> or a <u>human being</u>!

Beastly,
Bruce D. Patterson
Van Nuys, Calif.

Dear Rog-2000,

I must take offense with Warren Prindle's comments on Byrne's art. John Byrne is a damn fine artist. He has a nice, smooth creative style that many of today's artists lack. Viewing past work by John, I'm presently inclined to say he will make it big in the comic industry (when he gets in). I've only seen one of his strips and the layouts, style, everything was very, very good.Duffy is a good artist, considering what little experience he has had. He tends to be a little scratchy in places from time to time,but he has had not the experience that Sinnott, Adkins, or Anderson has.

Best,
Doc Lehman
Orriville, Ohio

Editors note: Warren Prindle has contacted us recently and expressed regrets over his previous statements. I do have to thank him, though, for provoking one of the largest "hate mail" campaigns in fandom. The preceeding was just a sampling of the type of letters we received.

Dear Gang,

I just picked up the CPL 'zine at Caveat Emptor. Nancy and I were rolling with laughter over your article on the course. Funny as hell! Let me tell you what you were missing and thus why you didn't get the TV and print coverage---JEWISH MANAGEMENT! That's the secret behind the comics! Now, if you ever begin another course, my two ex-roomies and myself(all of good Yiddish background) will...for a mere 10%...manage you the way they managed me! Such a deal!

As to CPL, while we're on the subject----

Fine art, very enjoyable! Where can we look foward to seeing more of Paul Gulacy in pro comics? As to the "Five Most Original Comic Series of 1973", I heartly agree with all save <u>Prez</u>. Prez!?!? I would add either Adventure, E-MAN, Shazam, or Brave & Bold, instead. Ah, well!

I would disagree with Craig Russell's impressions of Aparo! When you think of his work (even his early stuff--Nightshade, Thane of Bagarth, etc.), his Aquaman, Phantom Stranger, Batman, and Spectre...man! That's classic work! I hope fans remember all that when awards voting begins!

Best,
Michael Uslan
Bloomington, Ind.

(Thanks, Mike! The last we saw of Sterno, he was munching on a Kosher frank and mumbling something about already having had an operation. Paul's work should be appearing more often within the pages of Marvel comics..check your newstand for time and place. Word comes from Legion wizard Harry Broertjes that he's had regrets over his choice of Prez, and that if he had it to do over would have looked more favorably towards E-MAN, despite the latter's brief appearances in '73.As for Mr. Aparo, he's one of our favorites, too! And there'll be more on that scene, later! .....Rog- 2000

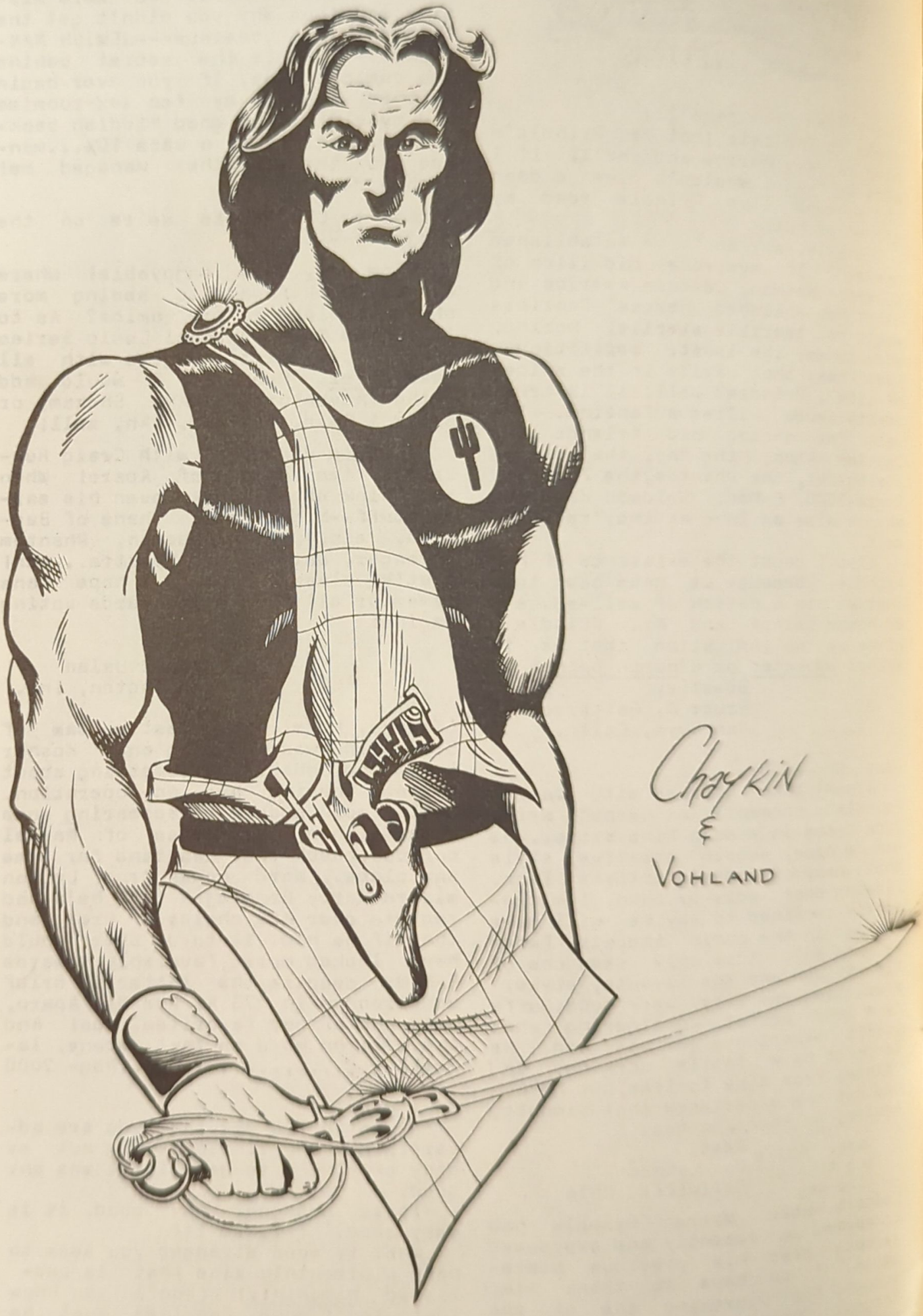
Dear Bob,

I see in TBG #52 that you are advertising CPL 7. So I dug out my copy of CPL 6 to see if it was any good.

It is not just any good, it is very good. I liked it!

What is even stranger you seem to have a bimonthly zine that is published <u>bimonthly</u>! (Don't you know that isn't done, fanzines must be published at irregular intervals.)

William Denholm
Menlo Park, Calif.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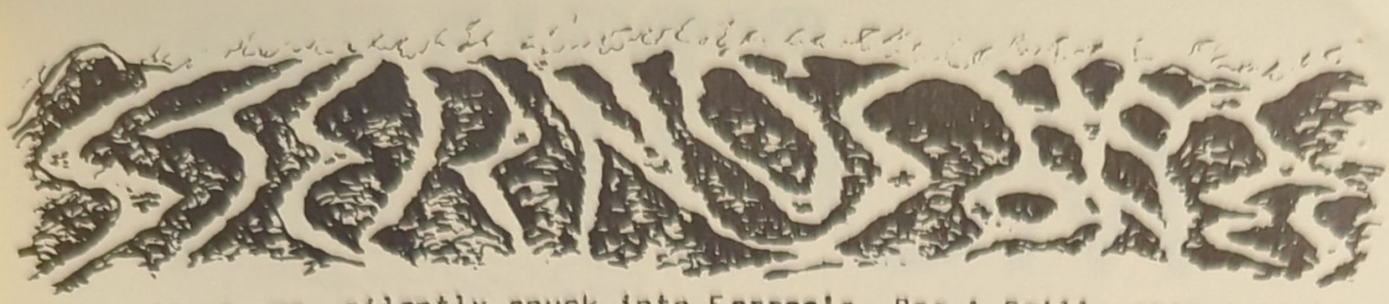


(Last issue, we silently snuck into Ferree's Bar & Grill--open noon to two...Monday thru Saturday--to listen in on the sudsy conversations of one Frank Maynerd & his buddy, Sterno. By carefully evesdropping on one of Sterno's flashbacks we learned how he founded Indiana University's experimental course "The Comic Book in Society" At the end of that flashback Sterno remembered how, after turning the course over to the more-than-capable hands of one Mike Uslan he returned to find the young Mr. Uslan surrounded by a camera crew from NBC news. Now read on.....)

TAKE THE DIPLOMA AND RUN!

One of Ferree's friendly waitresses came by.

"Anymore?" She said.

"Another pitcher!" I replied, pulling out a few bills. "This one's on me."

"So tell me, Sterno," Maynerd interjected, "Howcum you're not a big celebrity like Uslan?"

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you!"

"So try me!"

"Well, rememoer how I told you that I didn't like teaching?"

"Yeah, something about never being able to find the time or the funds to really prepare like you wanted to."

"Right! Well, Mike is a lot better at organizing things than I can ever be. He was having a pretty good turn-out with his Free University course on comics. Then there's the fact that he grew up in Deal Park, New Jersey!"

"Mike's from Deal?" asked Maynerd between bites of his pretzel. "Hey, I usta know this dynamite chick from there! I ever tell ya about..."

"Don't interrupt! You wanna know why Mike is famous and I'm not..or don't you?"

"My applogies, Sahib, but what does growing up in Deal have to do with the great one's greatness?"

"Just accessibilty to the stars unshaven one! Deal is in the very backyard, so to speak, of Manhattan. Do you have any idea what it's like to be a growing comic fan in the New York area?"

"No, I don't!"

"Neither do I. However, Mike does. While other kids were learning to steal hubcaps & fake I.D.'s Mike was hanging around the innermost bowels of the DC vaults with guides like Julie Schwartz. Not a bad situation."

"So he knew some people in the industry!"

"He knew people in the industry & he knew how to talk to the right people at the right times. The most I could ever weedle out of the university was the loan of a slide projector. Mike got a working budget, brought in Denny O'Neil one week, Englehart and Conway the next....and got an extra credit hour tacked on the course. Of course, he did great things for the experimental curricula people!"

"How so?"

"Publicity, my dear Franklin, publicity! As you may recall, when I started the course, there was a small write-up in the paper. The same thing happened when Mike took over ....with one exception. The second story was fed to the wire services. Evidently it was a slow news day and a few editors in a few places picked up on the story. Then the snowball really started rolling! See, just about everyone has read funny books at one time or another...and most folks have fond memories of comics, whether they'll admit it or not! Somebody at NBC in Chicago got interested, called Mike & sent down a camera crew. And, well the rest you know!"

"And you're not bitter, Sterno?"

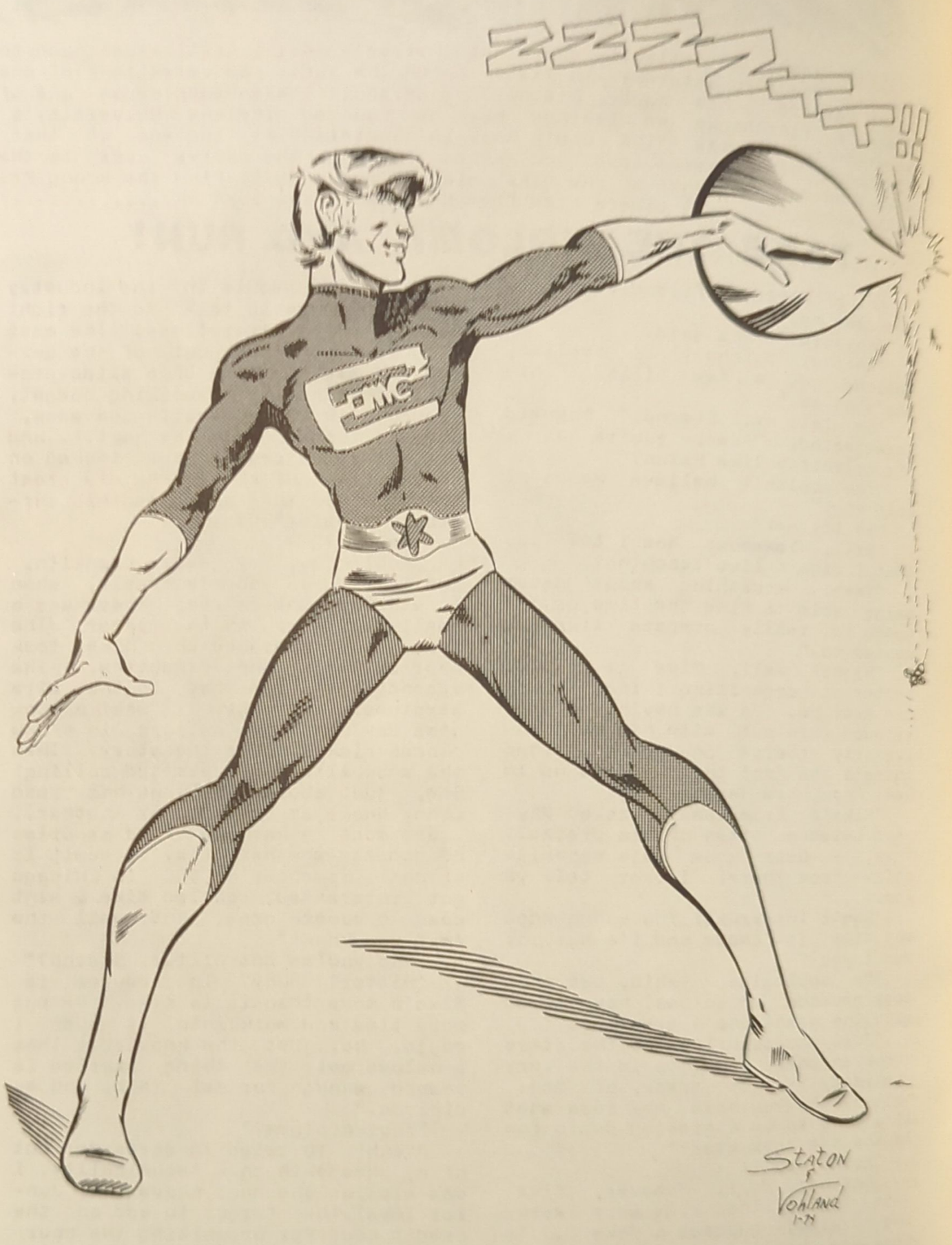
"Bitter? Why? The course is Mike's more than it is mine. He put more time and work into it than I could. No, just the knowledge that I helped get the thing started is reward enough for me! That, and my diploma."

"Your diploma?"

"Yeah! IU tried to screw me out of my sheepskin on a technicality. I was missing one hour above the Junior level.They forgot to add on the credit hour for organizing the course. I went to see one of the assistant deans immediately..."

"And so the Dean pulled a few strings and you got your diploma..."

"and I ran like a thief! Frank, why don't you buy the next round?"


ZZZNTT!!
EMC
STATON
&
VOHLAND

FORTIER'S FANDOM

As a comic collector, I tend to stay away from purchasing comics via subscriptions. Over the years I've had enough experiences to know about torn copies or missed issues. Frustrating annoyances we all like to avoid. Therefor I generally go visit the six or so stands in our county weekly and have been able to satisfy my collecting needs; more or less.

That is until I discovered Charlton's newest super-hero mag. E-Man, was not being locally distributed! Being an avid Joe Staton fan, I realized the situation was a desperate one. Even to the point of ordering a subscription!

It was only by sheer coincidence that I then discovered Charlton was at this time offering not only an extra issue with each $1.00 sub, but also a give-away booklet entitled THE COMIC BOOK GUIDE FOR THE ARTIST -WRITER-LETTERER. Now that kind of bargain really helped ease the pain and so I sent in my crisp, new dollar bill.

Several weeks later, I arrived at home to find an envelope from the Charlton Co. in my mail. But that was all! An empty envelope!

My mind steamed in total fury! Gad! "They blew it," a tiny voice inside echoed repeatingly, "They blew it!"

Realizing, by the size of the envelope, it had been intended to carry their give-away guide, I immediately took up pen and wrote directly to Charlton's editor George Wildman. If the error was to be corrected at all, there was no time to waste.

My letter was cordial, yet to the point, and before I finished I also mentioned the bad distribution given E-Man in our locale. With fingers crossed and a prayer on my lips, I mailed it off.

As the days went by, since the mailing of my letter, my thoughts envisioned further confusion and mix-ups. Would I ever get my first issue of E-Man due me? What if all I ever received were empty envelopes? And if so, could there possibly be a fandom for envelope collecting? The agony was unbearable!

Finally the shadows faded away, the sun rose high in the sky...and Charlton replied. And how!

In one swift bolt I found myself with (A) two copies of E-MAN #2 (one as my subscription starter and the other as a complimentary copy from Mr. Wildman.), (B) one copy of E-MAN #1 (again, as a gift from Mr. W.), (C) two copies of the Guide Booklet! (you guessed it, again an extra copy) and (D) one fantastically kind letter from Nick Cuti, the assistant editor. Mr. Cuti apologized for the goof and explained the extras were given in retribution to any inconvience they had caused. By now I was nearly in shock! There was even comments to the effect that my problems with distribution of Charlton comics would be promptly handled.

Perhaps in this day of Watergate and I.T.T. scandles, we are prone to distrust so easely. Each of us has become that tiny bit more cynical, and in so becoming, we have lost a great deal.

Obtimism is a flower of faith. It grows in love and truth and is nurtured by trust. Okay, so perhaps the majority of comic management staffs don't give a damn about fans. But some <u>do</u>!

Thus on the day my second son, Kevin Douglas, was born I received a letter from the gentleman in charge of distribution for our region. Somehow, I wasn't surprised. I knew that his letter would contain beneficial information and that he would be only too happy to be of further assistance in any way possible. I knew because the people at Charlton had told me such.

You know, Mr. Wildman and Mr. Cuti, it's quite a nice world at that. Thanks.

Ron Fortier
13A Water St.
Somersworth, N.H.
03878

cplans publications REVIEW

"WAITING FOR THE SPIRIT....OR SOMETHING LIKE HIM"

It was 1952 when Denny Colt last took a regular breath. Oh,it's true that we had an occasional glimpse of the rough-&-tumble sleuth amongst the publications of Harvey and Waldman, but we'd never really seen his return until days most recent. First it was special printings...little offset jobbers about the dimensions of this very magazine. Then there were the undergrounds, with their brief-but-promising taste of things to come. And somewheres in between came that beautiful shot from the blue...the special Canadian tabloid. But now we've really got something to sink our teeth into! The Spirit is back....in magazine form....on a regular basis! Yes, it seems like ol' Jim Warren is trying to play Santa Claus. Oh, the book is just reprints to be sure, but what reprints! And that cover blurb says it all: "Starring the World's Greatest Comic Character!"

"But it's only a bi-monthly!" you say."What'll we do in the meantime?"

Funny you should ask! Because Uncle Will has a couple of goodies up his sleeves that'll have you coming back for more! We're speaking of a couple of oversized paperback publications from the Poorhouse Press.. Will Eisner's Gleeful Guides...one entitled Communicating with Plants, the other Occult Cookery. What are they?Let's take the former. Imagine, if you will, Commisioner Dolan's in-law, Ebony's uptown cousins,and the friendly folks who used to live just down the block from the Colts. Now, imagine those same folks giving useful instruction in how to have a meaningful relationship with the world of flora. Got it? Good! Now, on to (drool) Occult Cookery!

Occult Cookery is your basic offbeat cookbook...with one important difference! This "saucerer's apprentice"* properts to present culinary recipes that have some mystic properties...from ideas for soups that weave horrid curses to charmed appetizers guaranteed to boost your income, liven parties,and....hmmm... cure virginity!

Be that as it may, both books are profusely illustrated in the distinctive Eisner style and deserve your immediate attention. If you can't find them in your friendly neighborhood bookstore, they can be ordered...along with two other Gleeful Guides,Facts,Trivia & Statistics and How to Teach Your Dog to Sing from Poorhouse Press, 461 Park Ave. South,New York, New York 10016. The price is a mere $1.95 each.

Oh, and in case we forgot to mention it, anything Mr. Eisner does is loved and cherished by your obedient robot...who knows what to review & when!

Rog-2000

*IMPORTANT NOTICE: This is not our pun! The blame falls solely on the shoulders of one Willis Rensie of New York City!

THE SECRET LIFE OF PETER PARKER...PART TWO

THE KOSHER ARACHNID

by Frank Maynerd

Comics--like it or not--rely on stereotypes with regards to character personalities. Oh, there are exceptions, but for the most part comic book characters can be found to revert to (stereo) type. A certain character is found to be "clumsy", or he's a "jock", or he's enigmatic. So, with this in mind let's take a close look at Marvel's wallcrawler.

Just what do we know about Peter Parker? An orphan, he was raised by a doting aunt and uncle in the area of Queens. His Aunt May, a surrogate mother image, nearly smothered the boy with affection. She seemed to be constantly feeding him, worrying about his health--and probably with good reason! Peter, while hardly the weakling he was thought to be in his pre- Spidey days, was a slight boy, taking more after his natural mother in this respect (both his father and uncle were stocky built). Because of the strong family influence, his slight physique, and a general clumsiness which can be attributed to a late adolescence, Parker quite naturally developed an inferiority complex. Given time he probably would have come out of his shell, perhaps during the later part of his high school career or at least shortly after he entered college. But, of course, such things were not to be.

Parker's possibilities as a late bloomer would have seemed almost assured by his incredibly analytical mind and his more-than-nominal appearance. Peter was not an unattractive youth! He was, in fact, handsome enough to appeal to his contemporaries (Liz Allen, Mary Jane Watson, and the late Gwen Stacy) and to women a few years his senior (Betty Brant). And for all of his complexes Peter was--and is--smart. His natural savy for sciences made post-Sputnik curriculum mere child's play. Nor is there any doubt that such a complete student as Peter would have torn into the humanities with the same fervor that he tackled the hard sciences. (This has recently been substantiated in Spiderman #130, page 17, panels 4 and 5-- ed.) Not only would the works of philosophy and psychology be highly recommended by school counselors and the like, but they would provide an excellant medium for Parker to engage in a bit of soul-searching. Peter, after all, has ever been an introspective lad. As for his sex life, we have no information. It would probably be safe to assume that he graduated from high school with his virginity intact. As for after that time, it is hard to say. However, it is worth noting that it is hard to freely engage in heavy petting when you are wearing a secret costume under your clothing.

So, what do we know about Peter Parker, the youth? He was an alienated young man, apart from the rest of his peer group both socially and intellectually. His life was largely affected by a dominant mother figure within the family, and he was probably sexually frustrated. Now, who does <u>that</u> sound like? Wouldn't the same general description also

(Continued on following page...)

fit one Alexander Portnoy? Well then, let's see if the analogy can be pushed a little further. Let us deviate for a moment.

There exists amongst certain religious groups a basic ethnicity that is often manifest in the member's personality. To take a rather drastic example, Amish children are taught the virtues of somber clothing and the distrust of machinery. Drastic, true. But other more widely-spread religions have --shall we say -- religious-based traits which are acquired enviromentally and subtly influence their character.

Now, if we return to the original idea of comic book characters having stereotypical personalities, what a fantastic possibility arises! Could it be that Peter Parker is Jewish? The pieces of the personality-puzzel certainly appear to fall into place! After all, as old stereotypes fall, new ones often stand to take their places. Just as the bearded pawnbroker was a stereotype of old, so the hung-up Portnoy is steadily becoming a stereotype of today! But certainly no such stereotypes would consciously be applied in the formative years of the early sixties, when the Comics Code Authority still wielded a mighty blue pencil Ah, but what of the subconscious? Doesn't a writer often put a bit of himself into his work, into his characters? And couldn't that subtle touch of the subconscious get by the sometimes crossed-eyes of the CCA, yet still show up in the characters? In other words, isn't it possible that one Stanley Leiber put just a little bit of the kosher into his web-slinger? Possible, but still highly theoretical. But still, too, what great new possibilities come to mind!

Think for a moment what new facets a bit of ethnic Jewery could open in Parker's personality. The mind boggles. In fact, it is a wonder that Mr. Lee with his perchant for throwing the occasional morality-play gambit into his books didn't recognize the untapped potential many years ago. But will we ever see Spidey blossom into an ethnic hero? Probably not. Aside from the fact that anti-Smitism still rears its ugly head in parts of the country, Parker and his costumed counterpart exact too much of an identification with youthful readers across the country to interject any drastic deviation on religious grounds at this late date. So, we can probably forget any notions of a theo-ethnic tag for out young hero. Still, I can't help but wonder everytime Peter digs into a bowl of Aunt May's chicken soup.....

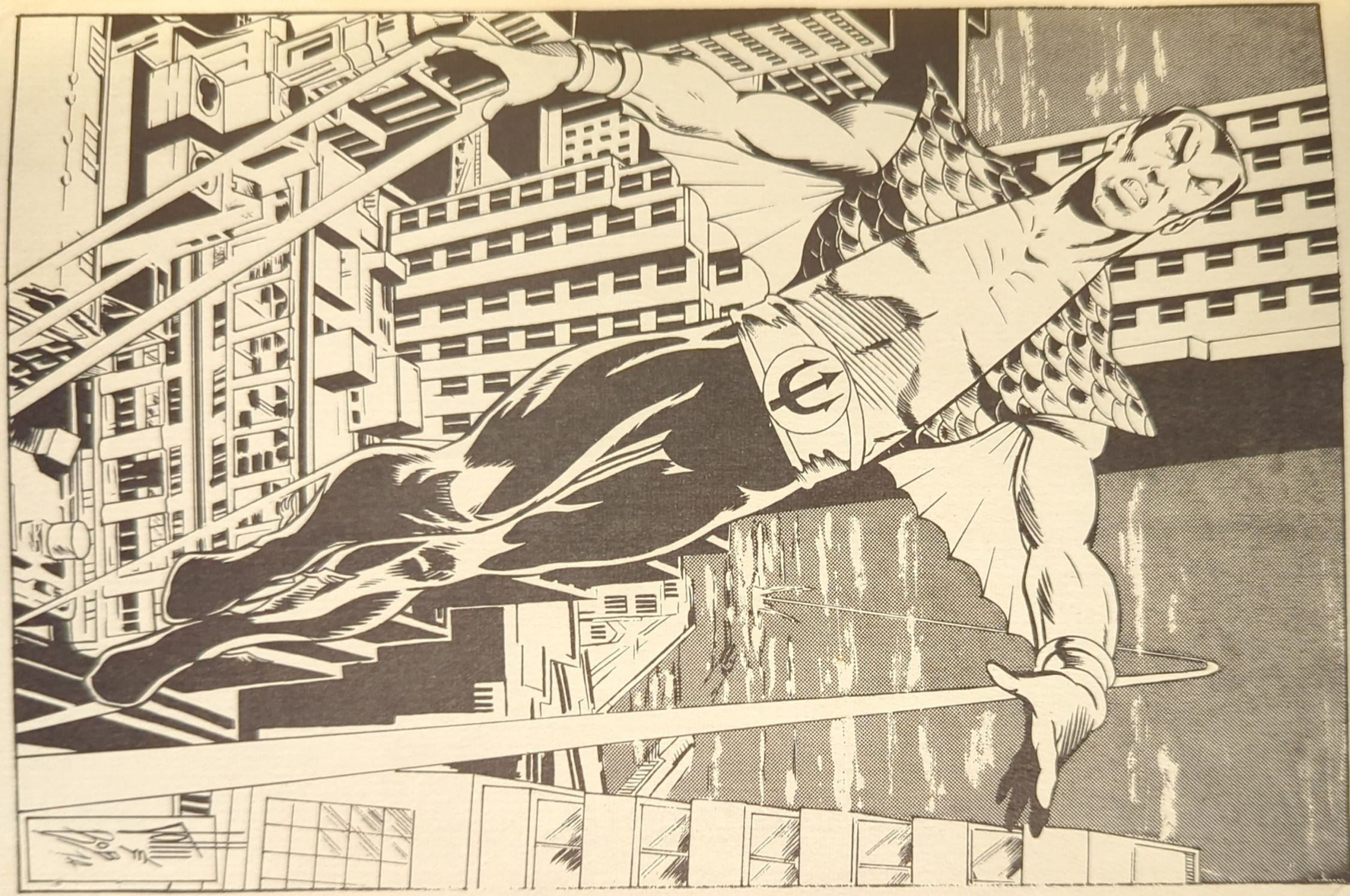
"Is Parker orthodox or reform?"

something

BIG

is coming

AUG. 1st.



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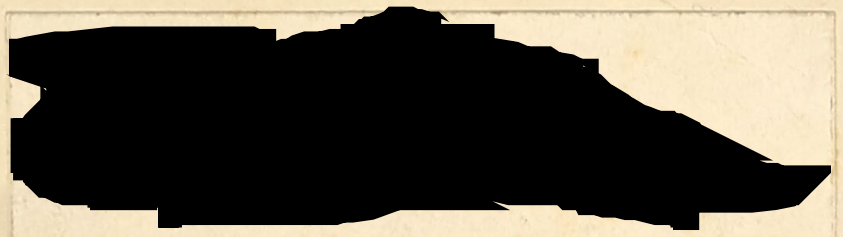

Something BIG is coming!

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